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EXPLORING SHRI JIVA GOSWAMI'S SANDARBHAS

BHAGAVĀN



What is jīvan-mukti?

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The term jīvan-mukti is commonly encountered in Gauḍīya parlance. Here I examine Śrī Jīva Goswami's explanation of it. He takes this up in the Pṛiti Sandarbha Anuchheda 3.2. His commentary suggests a definition of jīvan-mukti as:

jīvan-mukti = jīvad-daśāyām mukti = mukti in the living condition

Here the term 'living condition' or jīvad-daśā is used to separate this mukti from utkrānta mukti, which is mukti after death (utkrānta-daśā), and which is discussed in the preceding Anuccheda 3.1. For those who need a refresher on the concept of mukti, it is discussed in detail here (<https://bhaktitattva.com/2022/10/03/a-definition-of-mukti/>).

Śrī Jīva Goswami states that jīvan-mukti is of two types:

brahma-sākṣātkāra-lakṣaṇā = characterized by the sākṣātkāra of Brahman:

bhagavat-sākṣātkāra-lakṣaṇā = characterized by the sākṣātkāra of Bhagavān:

brahma-sākṣātkāra-lakṣaṇā jīvan-mukti

In Anuccheda 3.2, Śrī Jīva Goswami explains the jīvan-mukti in which there is a sākṣātkāra, direct experience, of Brahman. His method, as always, involves citing verses from the Bhāgavata:

tatra brahma-sākṣātkāra-lakṣaṇāṁ jīvan-muktim āha—

In this matter, jīvan-mukti characterized as the sākṣātkāra of Brahman is described by Śrī Sūta as follows:

yatreṁ sad-asad-rūpe pratiṣiddhe sva-saṁvidā | avidyayātmāni kṛte iti tad brahma-darśanam

That vision is the sākṣātkāra of Brahman (brahma-darśana) in which (yatra) these two gross (sat) and subtle forms (asat), which have been superimposed on the ātmā out of ignorance, are negated through authentic awareness of the self's essential nature. (sb 1.3.33)

The above translation, slightly modified from Babaji's translation, is based on Śrī Jīva Goswami's commentary which I do not reproduce here for brevity. His concluding statement, however, is revealing and important:

tataś ca jīvata evāvidyā-kalpita-māyā-kārya-sambandha-mithyātva-jñāpaka-jīva-svarūpa-sākṣātkāreṇa tādātmyāpanna-brahma-sākṣātkāro jīvan-mukti-viśeṣa ity arthaḥ ||

From this analysis, the verse's import is that the sākṣātkāra of Brahman, attained by conscious identity with that Reality (tādātmya) and occurring in the living condition itself is one specific type of jīvan-mukti. This sākṣātkāra of Brahman is accompanied by the sākṣātkāra of the jīva's svarūpa, which discloses the illusory nature of the relation with māyā's effects, a relation conceived out of ignorance.

Note the use of the word tādātmya in the above commentary. I have discussed the meaning of this word here (<https://bhaktitattva.com/2023/01/07/the-meaning-of-the-word-tadatmya/>). Also, note that he calls the sambandha, or relation, between the body and the ātmā as illusory (discussed more here (<https://bhaktitattva.com/2021/02/21/is-the-jivas-bondage-real/>)). He goes on to cite four verses from the Bhāgavata (bhā.pu. 3.28.35-28). I cite these verses at the end of the article for completeness (see Appendix), but include his main conclusion from the verses below, which is insightful.

tatra hi, pratinivṛtta-guṇa-pravāhaḥ san ātmānam paramātmānam īkṣata iti muktāśrayam [35] ity-ātau, sva-svarūpa-bhūte mahimni avasito niṣṭhāṁ prāptaḥ sann upalabdha-

parātma-kāṣṭha iti so'py etayā [36] ity-ādaḥ, svarūpaṁ jīva-brahmaṇor yāthārthyam adhyagamad iti dehaṁ ca [37] ity-ādaḥ | evaṁ pratibuddha-vastuḥ iti deho'pi [38] ity-ādaḥ ceti | tasmād asya prārabdha-karma-mātrāṇām anabhiniveśenaiva bhogaḥ | evaṁ evoktaṁ tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ śoka ekatvam anupaśyataḥ [Īśopaniṣad 7] iti |

[Each of these verses contains a statement that particularizes the symptoms of mukti, as now shown.] In the first verse from the group (sb 3.28.35), mukti is characterized as the direct perception (īkṣate) of the One Immanent Self (ekam ātmānaṁ paramātmānam) in the state of release from the flow of the material guṇas. In sb 3.28.36, mukti is described as resolute establishment (avasitaḥ, i.e., niṣṭhāṁ prāptaḥ) in one's own essential glory (mahimni), meaning one's own essential nature (sva svarūpa), which enables the immediate apprehension of the truth of the Supreme Self (upalabdha-parātma-kāṣṭhaḥ) [or of the self's conscious identity with Brahman (tādātmya)].

In sb 3.28.37, mukti is specified as the immediate intuition (adhyagamat) of one's own essential nature (svarūpaṁ), meaning the true nature (yāthārthyam) of both the jīva and Brahman. And finally, in sb 3.28.38, mukti is distinguished as the direct realization of the truth of the Self [ātma-tattvam] or of the Supreme Reality (pratibuddha-vastuḥ).

Consequently, the liberated adept merely undergoes the mature reactions of his prārabdha-karma without becoming engrossed in them. The same idea is expressed in Śrī Īśopaniṣad: In that [liberated] state, how can delusion and lamentation possibly remain for a person who witnesses oneness everywhere? (Īśopaniṣad 7)

So the symptoms of mukti are:

- a) direct perception of paramātmā,
 - b) establishment in one's own svarūpa,
 - c) experience of the true nature of both the jīva and Brahman,
- all while living in the body.

The verses further describe the state of such a jīvan-mukta (see appendix) –

[the jīvan-mukta] does not even notice whether by the will of providence the body he occupies is seated or standing, or whether by the same divine will it has moved to a different location or returned, just as a person blinded by intoxication does not perceive whether the clothes that adorn his body are still present or not.

bhagavat-sākṣātkāra-lakṣaṇā jīvan-mukti

In Anuccheda 9, Śrī Jīva Goswami discusses the second type of jīvan-mukti. Again, he cites a verse from the Bhāgavata—

athaitasyāṁ bhagavat-sākṣātkāra-lakṣaṇāyāṁ muktau jīvad-avasthāyām āha—

Next, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa describes to Uddhava the state of living liberation (jīvan-mukti) characterized by the sākṣātkāra of Bhagavān:

akiñcanasya dāntasya śāntasya sama-cetasah mayā santuṣṭa-manasaḥ sarvāḥ sukha-mayā
dīśaḥ || [bhā.pu. 11.14.13]

This entire world becomes of the nature of bliss for a person who is devoid of all possessiveness, self-controlled, established in inner tranquility, equally disposed toward all phenomenal uprisings, and fully satisfied at heart by Me [the very embodiment of supreme bliss (paramānanda-svarūpeṇaiva)]. (sb 11.14.13)

Śrī Jīva identifies that the verse specifies three qualities for such a jīvan-mukta:

- a) he is self-controlled (dāntasya),
- b) established in inner tranquility (śāntasya),
- c) equally disposed toward all phenomenal uprisings (sama-cetasah).

The reason for these qualities is that the person experiences Bhagavān everywhere (sarvatra tasyaiva sākṣātkārāt), such that everything is a source of bliss for him.

Summary

- Jīvan-mukti is mukti in the living condition; this is to distinguish it from mukti after death.
- Jīvan-mukti is of two types: brahma-sākṣātkāra-lakṣaṇā or bhagavat-sākṣātkāra-lakṣaṇā
- Brahma-sākṣātkāra-lakṣaṇa-jīvan-muktas are situated in their svarūpa, and experience Brahman through identity with themselves
- Bhagavat-sākṣātkāra-lakṣaṇa-jīvan-muktas have direct experience of Bhagavān, and they have this experience everywhere.

Appendix

SB 3.28.35-38 are as follows:

muktāśrayaṁ yarhi nirviṣayaṁ viraktaṁ nirvāṇam ṛcchati manaḥ sahasā yathārciḥ

ātmānam atra puruṣo'vyavadhānam ekam anvīkṣate pratinivṛtta-guṇa-pravāhaḥ

so'py etayā caramayā manaso nivṛttyā tasmin mahimny avasitaḥ sukha-duḥkha-bāhye
hetutvam apy asati kartari duḥkhayor yat svātman vidhatta upalabdha-parātma-kāṣṭhaḥ

dehaṁ ca taṁ na caramaḥ sthitam utthitaṁ vā siddho vipaśyati yato'dhyagamat svarūpam
daivād upetam atha daiva-vaśād apetaṁ vāso yathā parikṛtaṁ madirā-madāndhaḥ

deho'pi daiva-vaśagaḥ khalu karma yāvat svārambhakaṁ pratisamīkṣata eva sāsuh taṁ sa-
prapañcam adhirūḍha-samādhī-yogaḥ svāpnaṁ punar na bhajate pratibuddha-vastuḥ

When in this manner the [yogī's] mind is emptied of objective content [having withdrawn it from the object of meditation (dhyeya)], freed of its support [in the form of the meditator (dhyātā)] and detached [by virtue of the immediate experience of transcendental bliss (paramānandānubhava)], it attains cessation (nirvāṇa), like the flame of a lamp that is suddenly extinguished [when the oil is consumed]. In this state, the pure living entity (puruṣa), being released from the flow of the material guṇas, directly perceives the One Immanent Self (ekam ātmānam) without any intervening obstructions. Having thus immediately apprehended the truth of the Supreme Self [ātma-tattvam], he [the yogī] becomes resolutely established in his own essential glory [meaning his own essential nature (sva-svarūpa)], which transcends happiness and misery, through the ultimate dissolution of the mind [involving the complete extinction of avidyā] occurring by way of this [yoga discipline]. He then recognizes that the cause of pleasure and pain [namely, the sense of independent enjoyership (bhoktṛtva)] that he previously attributed to the self in fact belongs to the empirical ego, which is a product of ignorance.

On account of having realized his essential nature (svarūpam), the liberated adept, who has attained to the highest state of perfection, does not even notice whether by the will of providence the body he occupies is seated or standing, or whether by the same divine will it has moved to a different location or returned, just as a person blinded by intoxication does not perceive whether the clothes that adorn his body are still present or not.

The body too, which is subject to the will of providence [meaning the force of its prior impressions (pūrva saṁskāravaśena)], continues to function along with the senses until its prārabdha-karma comes to an end. [Yet] the adept who has ascended to the highest stage of yoga, culminating in samādhī, and who has thus directly realized the truth of the Self [ātmatattvam], no longer identifies with the body and its related objects, just as when a person is awake, he no longer remains identified with the body and objects witnessed in the dream state. (sb 3.28.35–38)

6 replies »

Radhe Radhe 🙏

REPLY

I have 5 questions Prabhuji

1. Is it true, that all of the above mentioned jivan-muktas attained perfection (brahma and Bhagavat-sākṣātkāra-lakṣaṇa-jīvan-mukti) only by Bhagavan's mercy by including bhakti in their practice (jnana, ashtanga yoga, uttama bhakti), and never independently by their own effort ?
2. Can any of those jivan-muktas become influenced by gunas of prakṛti (like becoming proud, angry, lusty, lazy or offensive) again after attaining such a liberation (while living in material world)?
3. Is taking diksa, siksa (education by studying and hearing siddhanta from qualified guru in parampara) and full surrender to one's guru necessary for achieving brahma and bhagavat sākṣātkāra-lakṣaṇa-jīvan-mukti ?
4. Is Bhagavat-sākṣātkāra-lakṣaṇa-jīvan-mukti synonymous to manifestation of bhāva (in raganuga bhakti) ?
5. When such a jivan-mukta "perceives" brahman or Bhagavan, how he perceives, by which tools or eyes he "sees"? Does he get "divine eyes" composed of antaranga-sakti (given by Bhagavan) to perceive? (but what in the case of a jnani – how they perceive non-perceivable?)

Thank you Prabhu 🙏

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1. Yes
2. Highly unlikely unless they commit offense
3. Yes
4. Yes
5. bhakta gets divine eyes. jnani experiences Brahma-ananda in the mind. He identifies as Brahman.

REPLY

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Thank you 🙏

1. When the atma “merge” into Brahman after leaving the body, how it percieves or experiences Brahman?
2. And if there is actally nothing to percieve, know or feel, what makes it “perfect” about attaining of such a state of existence for an atma?
3. Is it true that atma experiences jivananda (absence of suffering) there (in Brahman) which does not belong to Brahman but which is an inherent quality of an atma, but because attainment of Brahman is (an eternal) mukti, it is final destination for atma along with its experience of jivananda? Or is there any extra ananda added to it and experienced exclusively in Brahman (in sayujya mukti)?

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1. It cannot perceive anything as no mind and senses.
2. It is situated in itself free from upadhis. Other than that, there is no other perfection.
3. Even the experience of absence of suffering requires a mind. I used to think that one experiences ananda of Brahman after mukti, but recent discussions on Priti Sandarbha by Babaji suggest that there is no experience of that also. Need a mind for any experience. It's just existence and nothing else.

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Radhe Radhe 🙏

REPLY

I had a couple of questions.

I understand hladini shakti is responsible for the bliss or experience of prema under bhagavat-sākṣātkāra-lakṣaṇā with respect to the different bhavas.

Question: what is the source of bliss for one who attains Brahma-sākṣātkāra-lakṣaṇa? Is it also the same hladini shakti which gives the experience of prema or is the source something

different?

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A devotee experiences Brahman as separate. This experience is by hladini sakti. No **REPLY**
be said about a jnani as the jnani experiences it through identity with it – aham Brahma smi.
It is anirvacaniya.

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